

## Excerpt from *Dr No* by Ian Fleming

The centipede had reached his knee. It was starting up his thigh. Whatever happened he mustn't move, mustn't even tremble. Bond's whole consciousness had drained down to the two rows of softly creeping feet. Now they had reached his flank. God, it was turning down towards his groin! Bond set his teeth. Supposing it liked the warmth there! Supposing it tried to crawl into the crevices! Could he stand it? Supposing it chose that place to bite? Bond could feel it questing among the first hairs. It tickled. The skin on Bond's belly fluttered. There was nothing he could do to control it.

But now the thing was turning up and along his stomach. Its feet were gripping tighter to prevent it failing. Now it was at his heart. If it bit there, surely it would kill him. The centipede trampled steadily on through the thin hairs on Bond's right breast up to his collar bone. It stopped. What was it doing? Bond could feel the blunt head questing slowly to and fro. What was it looking for? Was there room between his skin and the sheet for it to get through? Dare he lift the sheet an inch to help it? No. Never! The animal was at the base of his jugular. Perhaps it was intrigued by the heavy pumping of his blood. Damn you! Bond tried to communicate with the centipede. It's nothing. It's not dangerous, that pulse. It means you no harm. Get on out into the fresh air!

As if the beast had heard, it moved on up the column of the neck and into the stubble on Bond's chin. Now it was at the corner of his mouth tickling madly. On it went, up along the nose. Now he could feel its whole weight and length. Softly Bond closed his eyes. Two by two the pairs of feet, moving alternately, tramped across his right eyelid. When it got off his eye, should he take a chance and shake it off - rely on its feet slipping in his sweat? No, for God's sake! The grip of the feet was endless. He might shake one lot off, but not the rest. With incredible deliberation the huge insect rambled across his forehead. It stopped below the hair. What the hell was it doing now?

Bond could feel it nuzzling at his skin. It was drinking! Drinking the beads of salt sweat. Bond was sure of it. For minutes it hardly moved. Bond felt weak with the tension. He could feel the sweat pouring off the rest of his body on to the sheet. In a second his limbs would start to tremble. He could feel it coming on. He would start to shake with an ague of fear. Could he control it, could he? Bond lay and waited breath coming softly through his open, snarling mouth ... The centipede stirred. Slowly it walked out of his hair on to the pillow. Bond waited a second. Now he could hear the rows of feet picking softly at the cotton. It was a tiny scraping noise like soft fingernails. With a crash that shook the room Bond's body jack-knifed out of bed and on to the floor.

At once Bond was on his feet and at the door. He turned on the light. He found he was shaking uncontrollably. He staggered to the bed. There it was crawling out of sight over the edge of the pillow. Bond's first instinct was to twitch the pillow on the floor. He controlled himself, waiting for his nerves to quieten. Then softly, deliberately, picked up the pillow by one corner and walked into the middle of the room and dropped it. The centipede came out from under the pillow. It started to snake quickly away across the matting.

Now Bond was uninterested. He looked round for something to kill it with. Slowly he went and picked up a shoe and came back. The danger was past. His mind was wondering now how the centipede had got into his bed. He lifted the shoe and slowly, almost carelessly, smashed it down. He heard the crack of the hard carapace. Bond lifted the shoe.

The centipede was whipping from side to side in its agony - five inches of grey-brown, shiny death. Bond hit it again. It burst open, yellowy. Bond dropped the shoe and ran for the bathroom and was violently sick.